



# What is Kawasaki Disease?

Kawasaki disease is a children's illness. It's also known as Kawasaki syndrome or mucocutaneous lymph node syndrome. About 75 percent of people with it are under age 5. Boys develop the illness almost twice as often as girls. In the United States, it's more frequent among Asian-American children, but it occurs in children of all races and ethnicities.



One of the symptoms of Kawasaki disease is a rash on the back, chest and abdomen.

Photo courtesy of the Kawasaki Disease Foundation, Inc.

## What are the common symptoms of Kawasaki disease?

- Fever (ranging from 101 to above 104)
- Rash on back, chest, and abdomen
- Swollen, red hands and feet
- Bloodshot eyes
- Swollen lymph glands in the neck
- Irritation and swelling of the mouth, lips and throat

## What causes it?

Doctors don't know what causes it. It doesn't appear to be hereditary or contagious. Sometimes more than one child in a family can develop it, which may indicate a genetic predisposition for Kawasaki disease.

## How does Kawasaki disease affect the heart?

Damage sometimes occurs to the blood vessels, including those that supply the heart muscle (coronary arteries) and to the heart muscle itself. Part of a coronary wall can be weakened and balloon in an aneurysm. A blood clot can form in this weakened area and block the artery. If the clots are not prevented, this can lead to a heart attack.

Other changes include inflammation of the heart muscle or the sac that surrounds the heart. Abnormal heart rhythms and heart valve problems can also occur. The heart problems usually go away in five or six weeks. There's usually no lasting damage. But sometimes coronary artery damage persists.

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### How is it diagnosed?

Kawasaki disease cannot be diagnosed by a single test or group of tests. Doctors make the diagnosis after carefully examining the child, observing signs and symptoms and eliminating the possibility of other, similar diseases.

### How is Kawasaki disease treated?

Kawasaki disease is typically treated in the hospital at least while the child receives initial treatment. The stay is usually a few days up to a few weeks.

The standard initial treatment is aspirin and intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIG). Aspirin is used to reduce fever, rash, joint swelling and pain. It can also help prevent blood clots from forming.

IVIG, when given early in the illness, can reduce the risk of developing coronary artery abnormalities. Other medications such as steroids or infliximab may be used in children who do not respond to IVIG.



Aspirin is commonly prescribed to treat fever, rash, joint swelling and pain.

### HOW CAN I LEARN MORE?

- 1 Call **1-800-AHA-USA1** (1-800-242-8721), or visit **heart.org** to learn more about heart disease and stroke.
- 2 Sign up to get *Heart Insight*, a free magazine for heart patients and their families, at **heartinsight.org**.
- 3 Connect with others sharing similar journeys with heart disease and stroke by joining our Support Network at **heart.org/supportnetwork**.

### Do you have questions for the doctor or nurse?

Take a few minutes to write your questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider.

For example:

**What can I do to help my child deal with Kawasaki disease?**

### My Questions:

We have many other fact sheets to help you make healthier choices to reduce your risk, manage disease or care for a loved one. Visit **heart.org/answersbyheart** to learn more.